Dinner Is Best Served By Tour Bus

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/42900765.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Mischa Lecter
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe, Alternate Universe - Vampire, Vampire Hannibal Lecter, Blood Drinking, Character Turned Into Vampire, Hannigram Tropefest, Dark Will Graham, Don't copy to another site
Language:	English
Series:	Part 10 of Hannigram Big/Reverse Bangs
Collections:	Hannigram Tropest 2022
Stats:	Published: 2022-11-06 Words: 6,146 Chapters: 1/1

Dinner Is Best Served By Tour Bus

by TheSilverQueen

Summary

When Alana cajoles Will into taking an actual, real vacation, he decides to go to Florence and do touristy things, like eat good food and go on tours and be spontaneous. All good things, except for that fact that his spontaneous decision to go on a tour in the catacombs brings him face to face with very hungry vampires who think he is dinner.

“I believe you all were promised an experience of a lifetime,” says the definitely-not-a-statue man on the throne. “And we do plan to deliver. For the feast of a Council is, I’m told, quite the sight to behold. Sadly, none of us are vegetarians.”

Notes

This is my entry for the 2022 Hannigram Tropefest.

I was partnered with the lovely hit_the_books who made this thrilling piece of art - check it out on Tumblr or AO3.

Lastly, this fic was inspired by the scene from *Twilight: New Moon* where the Cullens meet the Volturi. Because Hannibal and his family feasting on a bunch of rude unsuspecting tourists was quite funny to me.

See the end of the work for more notes

“You can’t be serious,” Will says, staring at the tickets.

“Why not?”

Will scrubs at his eyes. He wishes he had his glasses, so that he could pretend to clean them or tweak them; those actions would take longer than scrubbing his eyes without adding fuel to Alana’s campaign. He says, “Alana, I am literally drowning in work. Drowning. Do you know how many grad papers I have left to do?”

“I hear an airplane is a good place to grade. Plenty of time, no distractions”

“And I’m still typing up the reports from the last case – ”

“You literally caught the murderer red-handed. They don’t need your testimony to convict him, and there were half a dozen FBI agents who can submit their own reports.”

“My dogs – ”

“You can get a sitter.”

Will throws down his trump card. “The Ripper, Alana. The Chesapeake Ripper. I’m so close – I can almost taste it. I just need a little more time with the files and I know I can catch him, and then I can finally – ”

Alana crosses her arms. It’s the first movement she’s made since she walked into Will’s office and put a folder containing an itinerary and tickets on top of the paper warzone that is Will’s desk. Coupled with the way she leans forward, Will knows that she’s finally decided to properly engage in battle.

“Finally what, Will?” Alana prompts.

“Uh – ”

“Sleep? I heard from Jack that you got picked up again for sleepwalking. Eat? You’ve been here for twelve hours according to campus security, and you’ve not ordered food, left to get food, or gone to the cafeteria. And don’t even try to tell me you brought food, because we both know that’s a lie.”

“I just need – ”

“A break,” Alana finishes. “You need a *break*, Will. Otherwise you are going to break.”

“I’m not a delicate teacup,” Will snaps.

“No, you’re a human who is working three jobs and is close to collapse because of it.” Alana sighs. “Listen, Will. The Ripper’s been on the loose for decades. A month or two more before closing the case won’t hurt. And sometimes, the best way to crack a case is to step back and

do other things before returning – you know this. The brain needs a rest. Not to mention your body."

"And your idea of a rest is," Will picks up the tickets and squints, "Florence, Italy?"

"Jack said he took Bella there for his honeymoon. Very romantic."

Will rolls his eyes. Alana's been on him since day one to form more social connections, because *humans are social creatures, Will* and *community is important to your health, Will*. "Ha ha, very funny."

"Also very peaceful. Come on, Will. Go get some fresh air, enjoy some sunshine, taste some food that isn't hamburgers and French fries."

"Even Florence must have McDonalds."

Alana tilts her head and smiles. She's winning and she knows it, and Will hates her a little bit for it, but honestly, his eyes are dry and his head is spinning and the lure of sunshine and fresh air is pretty tempting right now. Not to mention she's right – he can always come back refreshed and tackle his caseload with a rejuvenated mind.

At the very least, it'll keep the BAU from growing complacent about him, since they'll be deprived of his skills for – if Alana has her way – at least two to three weeks.

Will puts down the tickets and eyes the itinerary. It is fortunately not stuffed to the gills, because Alana knows him well, but it does contain some "suggestions" for places to sightsee and restaurants to eat at. There's even a few places where Will can apparently camp out and fish.

"I knew I shouldn't have told you I liked to fish," Will mutters, but he smiles to soften the blow.

Alana raises an eyebrow. "Communication is part of a healthy relationship between friends," she says archly. "Also, your little secret was out when you brought fish tacos to the potluck and told everyone that you caught, cleaned, and cooked the fish yourself."

"Past me shouldn't have been so loose lipped."

"And future you should be enjoying fishing in a stream. In Italy," she says pointedly.

Will considers it, truly: hiring a sitter for his dogs, packing up using the dusty suitcase he almost never uses, fishing out his passport from wherever he last hid it. Flying across the ocean on a very long and probably very crowded flight. Walking the streets of Florence at night, shopping in local markets by day, fishing in the streams when he gets tired of the big cities.

It's not a bad picture.

And it is only for two to three weeks . . .

“Okay,” Will relents. “Okay, fine, you win, I’ll go. My bank account might not be very happy with me, but I’ll go.”

“Oh, don’t worry, the FBI is being very generous and paying for all expenses,” Alana informs him slyly.

“Huh,” Will says. “Wonder who talked them into that?”

“Oh, just a little bird,” Alana says lightly, brushing off her perfectly clean skirt and tossing her hair back. “Now, then, let’s go out to eat – to get *actual* food, Will – so that we can discuss how you’re going to enjoy yourself and *not* work on your vacation.”

Day one of Will’s Florence trip is great. Well, mostly chaotic, but his flight lands at a decent time, his luggage makes it without being damaged, and he scores a cab straight to the hotel. He spends most of that day sleeping, actually, but the bed feels as fluffy as a cloud, so he considers it worth it.

Days two through five, Will spends wandering around, ducking into whatever shops catch his eye to explore and picking a new place to eat with every meal.

By day seven, however, Will is ready to climb the goddamn walls. Mostly this is because Alana managed to steal all of the files he packed away, so he can’t work on them, but the hotel’s WiFi going down compounds this issue because it means Will can’t just lay on the bed and squint at old Ripper news reports on his phone. He could watch the television, but one can only watch so many soap operas.

He’s desperate enough, in fact, that when a gorgeous blonde woman smiles at him and asks if he’s here for the “captivating tour of the catacombs of Florence” Will actually considers lying.

Then he remembers that he left most of his money in his hotel room, because he was only going out to grab lunch and come back in hopes that the WiFi would be fixed by then. “I, uh, sorry, I didn’t sign up in advance,” Will says apologetically. “And I didn’t bring a lot of cash with me – I could charge it to my card, I guess, but, um. Do you take American cards?”

“American? You are on vacation, sir?’

“Yeah, my friend said I needed to relax. Crazy, right?”

“Absolutely crazy,” she agrees in the sultriest tone of voice Will’s ever heard. “Almost as crazy as turning down a once in a lifetime tour! There are so many wonders down in the catacombs; I promise, it’s an experience you won’t regret.”

Will glances down. Alana had put a mention of the catacombs on Will’s suggestion list, but they’d nixed it early on because Will preferred fishing and eating to sightseeing.

“Come now, sir,” she says playfully. “A tourist like yourself, wandering around with no set destination when you have an entire city full of delights to amuse yourself with? Surely you

must be in want of something to pass a little time, no?"

"I guess."

"I see I must sweeten the deal. Very well." She leans in closer, and Will barely keeps his eyes averted from the barely contained cleavage in her skin tight dress. "My tour has had a few cancellations, and my company really doesn't like it when I have empty seats. You'd be doing me a favor, you see? And I can offer you a discounted rate. Win-win."

Will coughs and discretely takes a step back. And a second step, when she follows him. "I, um, I guess? How long will it take?"

"Oh, no more than an hour or two."

Will contemplates it: returning straight to his hotel room to eat and watch more terrible soap operas or to go on a tour of the catacombs and learn some interesting facts. The choice is beyond obvious. "Yeah, why not," he says. "I am on vacation. Should do at least one spontaneous thing before I head back to my boring regular job, right?"

She beams like a cat that's got the canary. "That's the spirit, sir! Right this way. I promise, it'll be an experience of a lifetime."

The catacombs are dank and dim and winding, but on the bright side, they're definitely cooler than standing on the hot streets above and the tour guide, whose name is apparently Mischa, provides very interesting facts as they wander around. If anyone ever gets murdered in a catacomb, Will thinks he'd be prepared.

Mischa gives them some time to gawk and take photos, but the cell reception is poor and the tour is on a time limit, so she keeps the pace brisk without being punishing. Will, who is trying to not be caught in the mass of other tourists with their wide brim hats and white polos and giant cameras, appreciates it, because it means that he doesn't have to walk at a turtle slow pace to easily remain at the back of the pack.

"Don't get lost, Mr. Graham!" Mischa calls out.

"Just admiring the view," Will replies. "You know a lot about these catacombs, huh?"

"Oh, yes, my brother was fascinated with them. He used to spend hours telling all sorts of tales. It became our secret place, you know?"

"He sounds like a great brother," Will says. "Does he work for this tour company too?"

Mischa looks away, her perfect customer service smile drooping a little bit. "Ah, unfortunately, he passed away. Incurable disease, we were told. Terminal. Didn't make it past the sunset."

" . . . Oh. I'm so sorry," Will says awkwardly.

She takes a deep breath and looks back at him, and like magic, the perfect smile is on her face again. It's almost hypnotic, her smile; Will wants to get closer, but at the same time, he wants to hide away, because it's clear that part of her is just acting for a job. Maybe not to the rest of the tourists, but Will can't escape what his empathy is telling him.

"No worries," she says cheerfully, like she's afraid he's going to leave a bad review or something. "His knowledge lives on in me, and I am forever grateful for that. Oh! We are almost at the best part of the tour. Come on, Mr. Graham."

Mischa gathers up the group and leads them to a giant door, which looks ancient, as if it's carved from the walls itself. It's beautiful and creepy, and Will kind of wants to Google the symbols on it.

"Now, welcome to the best kept secret in Florence!" Mischa announces, beaming from head to toe. "We are going to give you an exclusive peak into something that has made artists weep and scientists tremble and royals kneel. I present: the Vampire Council!"

With a flourish, she pushes the doors open to reveal . . . a lot of statues.

They're beautiful statues, to be sure. Will has no doubt that the artist who made them probably slaved over them for weeks or even months, because they look absolutely perfect – as lifelike as if a person had just paused, for a moment, and then been frozen forever in time. Each curve of their face, each shadow under their arms, even each fold of clothing looks so realistic that Will almost wants to reach out and touch out.

"Why vampires?" another tourist asks.

Mischa shrugs. "Because they did not appear to age with the passing of time, and it has been hundreds of years since they were first discovered. Also, beliefs in those times, you must understand, were different. They did not have the science we do today."

"Absolutely exquisite," another tourist exclaims. "Who was the artist?"

"Unknown," Mischa answers, prowling closer. "There are suspicions, of course. But the founder never did sign their work, so we are left only with our best guesses. Although there have been advances in carbon dating that look to provide promising results for . . ."

Will tunes out the lecture in favor of looking more closely at the middle of room. Right in middle there are three ornate thrones, carved from what look like marble, and posed atop the thrones are three statues that have been depicted with the most lavish clothing. A woman, with long luxurious curls and a dress as gold as the sun. Another woman, hair falling in gentle waves down her front and clad in a sharp riding suit, the color as red as fresh blood.

And a man, dressed in the most eye searing plaid pattern suit Will's ever had the misfortune of being within ten feet of.

It's also, Will realizes, a fairly modern suit: the cut, the pattern, the way his tie is knotted. Will's pretty sure no one dressed in that style of suit hundreds of years ago. And when he looks about the room, he sees that each statue has its own fashion: some do trend older, like

to Greco-Roman times, but some tend towards, like, the eighties, and of course there are a few that are also wearing modern style dresses and suits.

Will turns his head back to the man's statue. Something about it just . . . feels off about it. He steps closer, squinting, because the fabric almost looks like it moves –

And the statue winks at him.

Will stares. Stares some more. Does some quick thinking.

On one hand, yeah, he's hallucinated before. And not always when he's asleep either. One time he hallucinated an entire class lecture before his TA told him that he was just standing silently at the front of the room and clicking through slides.

On the other hand, Will is feeling *emotions* about the statue – emotions that aren't his, or Mischa's, or any of the other tourists. And his empathy does not trigger to inanimate objects. So either he's really lost his whole goddamn mind, or the statue did blink at him because it is able to think and feel and Will is picking up on those feelings, which means –

"Oh my god, you're alive," Will realizes, hastily backing up.

The statue has the gall to *smile* at him. "Clever boy," comes the voice from the not-statue's mouth, smooth and accented and dark as sin. "It appears the game is up. Shall we?"

The not-statue stands, tall and strong, and it's like some sort of secret signal is unleashed. One by one, the other statues also begin to move – cracking their necks, flexing their arms, tapping their feet. And they don't move like they were frozen stone come to life; they move like regular people who just paused and are now moving again.

"Well done, sister. This is excellent hunting," says the not-statue on the throne.

Mischa beams. "Thank you, brother."

Incurable disease, we were told. Terminal. Didn't make it past the sunset.

"I believe you all were promised an experience of a lifetime," says the not-statue man on the throne. "And we do plan to deliver. For the feast of a Council is, I'm told, quite the sight to behold. Sadly, none of us are vegetarians."

In the back of his mind, the part not fully paralyzed with fear and horror, Will almost laughs, because – well, yeah, of course the goddamn vampires aren't vegetarians.

Mischa and the other vampires laugh, the tourists start screaming, and Will bolts for the door like his life depends on it.

Because, for once, it does.

The vampires – because Will has no idea what else to call them, but they're definitely chomping all over the other tourists – don't shut the door, so Will is free to dodge the various

screaming humans and gleefully prowling vampires and head straight back into the catacombs. No one chases him, but the noises of the bloodbath behind him are motivating enough to kill his adrenaline in high gear.

He kind of wishes he had been paying more attention when Mischa led them in, though, because it turns out that catacombs all kind of look alike.

Will picks a random left, a random right, a random straight, and keeps on running. He sends a rat fleeing as he goes, and he feels a strange kinship with it; he wonders if the mixture of panic and doom he feels now is what rat feels like a cat chases after it, intent on making the rat its dinner.

Five minutes or five hours later, he comes to a little circular area that has a ladder leading upwards to a hole. It's not the place where they entered the catacombs, for sure, because that area had had a little area for them to grab some water and snacks, plus a large area where heavy bags and such could be stored in boxes for their return. But it has a ladder that leads up and hopefully out, and that's all Will cares about.

He dashes over, grabs the first rungs, starts climbing, and –

A brush of wind. That's all Will registers.

But the next thing he knows, his whole world goes upside down and he lands, hard, on the ground, as if a truck had just grazed him and knocked off the ladder.

A truck or a crazily fast and strong vampire, Will realizes, after he shakes his head to get his bearings and spots red eyes in the shadows.

"What, you decided you wanted a tenderized dinner?" Will calls out, because he needs to stall this vampire from just ripping him to shreds and sassiness has always been Will's best weapon.

The red eyes blink. "I am interested in your blood, not your flesh. Regrettably, my digestive system can only process fluids."

Will squints in the darkness. The voice doesn't sound like it's coming from where the eyes are – but then again, who knows. Maybe throwing voices is a vampire special ability.

Then the word choice catches up with him. "Regrettably?" he repeats.

"You appear to be fit," the vampire says, as casual as though they were strolling on the sunlit streets above and not squaring off in the dark catacombs below. "Your meat would likely make a very nice meal, were I able to enjoy it."

Will grabs the ladder behind him and uses it to slowly push himself to his feet. "I didn't think vampires were cannibals."

"Hmm. Cannibalism would imply that we were equals," the vampire says, sounding amused.

Will blinks. Just once. And then the damn vampire is just *there*, two feet from Will's face, as though he had teleported in the second Will had taken his gaze off of him. He appears completely unruffled – not breathing hard, not a single bloodstain marring his suit – and the look in his eyes matches a cat that's found its prey and knows it can't escape.

It's a dark look, one that promises pain and savagery. The monster under the mask.

But there is still a mask, Will realizes. This vampire still clings to some veil of humanity – why else bother to update his clothes to modern fashions? Why else bother to let Will have the chance to run? Why else bother to talk to him, and not just attack?

Will takes a deep breath. For once, he is glad that he left his glasses in his room. He stares into those deep, dark, blood-red eyes, and –

"You don't think of humans as equals," he realizes. "Even though you were once mortal. In fact . . . you never considered any human as an equal."

The vampire blinks. On anyone else, it would be a normal reflex, but – he's a vampire. He doesn't need to blink, any more than he needs to breathe. Will has startled him.

Emboldened, Will continues, "You said *regrettably*. You miss the times back when you still had ability to digest things other humans can, now that you are restricted to only blood. No, more than miss – you *mourn*. You built your whole life around it and like that – it was taken. And now you only have blood to sate your creativity."

"Creativity," the vampire repeats, rolling the syllables around in his mouth like he's tasting a particularly fine wine. "What an interesting choice of words."

Then he grins, just a little bit, and leans forward, so that Will feels the puff of air more than he hears the words: "And how does that make you feel, little mongoose?"

Will says, "Oh my god, were you a *shrink*?"

The vampire rears back like Will's just slapped him. His expression is full of affront. "That is a very rude word to apply to my profession," he informs Will.

"Um, you're about to kill me and drink my blood. I think I'm allowed all the rudeness I want."

"I'm not going to kill you, little mongoose," the vampire says. He raises a hand and cups Will's cheek, sliding it down until it rests on his neck. It's strange to feel sensation and yet not feel warmth; the vampire is no warmer than water fresh from the fridge. "I'm going to feast upon your blood first and then you will expire due to exsanguination when I am finished with you. Dead blood is not appealing to us."

Instinct drives Will further back against the ladder. He's trapped and he knows it and this vampire knows it, but he still pushes against the ladder, hoping against hope for a way out.

"So why the tour charade?" he blurts out as the vampire takes deep inhales of his scent. "Why not just, I dunno, swipe people off the street?"

The vampire hums. “Even a vampire likes to enjoy a fine meal.”

“ . . . Fear makes the meat bitter, and thus the blood,” Will realizes. He looks up into the vampire’s face. “How – How many people did you kill?”

“I have had many names,” the vampire tells him. He’s got one hand on Will’s waist now, a mirror to the one on Will’s neck, as if they’re dancing. “The Italians used to me *Il Mostro*. The Lithuanians, the *Silent Death*. Even the Americans gave me names, although they were . . . less tasteful. Don’t worry; I shan’t hold your motherland’s lack of taste against you.”

“Wait – ”

The vampire leans in and *bites*. The pain is sharp and piercing, like a needle scraping bone, but it doesn’t end – it just keeps going.

Will is vaguely aware of kicking and punching and struggling, but the vampire isn’t moved by anything. He’s unaffected by Will’s screams, unhurt by Will’s physical attacks. The world begins to blur and fade, and Will thinks of a rat caught in the jaws of a cat, facing imminent death. He kind of wishes he had something, anything, even rat-sharp teeth, so that he could inflict vengeance upon his killer.

And then the vampire abruptly pulls back. Lips smeared with blood, he frowns at Will, as if he’s some sort of teacher and Will’s forgotten his homework.

“You taste . . .” He licks at his lips. “Hmm. Very interesting.”

Will tries to say something. He’s pretty sure he fails.

“No, little mongoose, hush. You’ve lost too much blood. But you needn’t worry; in my previous life, I was a physician as well as a psychiatrist. I will make sure you survive.”

Will contemplates, just for a moment, the horrifying idea of being a kept dinner for a vampire, fed only enough to remain alive so that he can be bitten over and over and over again – and promptly passes the hell out.

Will wakes up, which is weird in and of itself. He also wakes up in a bed, which is doubly weird. And then for the weird cherry on top of the weird sundae of this very weird day, he’s no longer dressed in the clothes he was wearing. No, now he is wearing a fine expensive shirt and perfectly pressed expensive pants. He even has expensive leather shoes on his feet.

“Ah, good. You’re awake. The sausages have just finished cooking.”

Will opens his mouth. Closes it. Opens it again. “Did you just . . . redress me and cook me food?”

“Your clothes were an absolute disaster,” the vampire says primly. He’s lost the plaid suit jacket, but now he’s wearing an apron, like he’s a normal human who can be hurt by grease popping or something. “I had them burnt immediately.”

“Because that’s not overly dramatic,” Will says, rolling his eyes. He pushes himself up, but slowly, because even though he doesn’t feel faint, he doesn’t want to risk tumbling out of the bed. The last thing he needs is for the vampire who wants to suck him dry to bridal carry him to any more places. “Also, what’s with the food? I thought you couldn’t digest stuff.”

“I cannot. But you need food. So I procured some.”

The eggs look gorgeous and fluffy. The sausages are crisp and glistening. Even the coffee smells out of this world. It’s all picture perfect – just like the statues were before they came to life and tore everyone to pieces.

Will lifts his chin. “How do I know they aren’t poisoned?” he demands.

“It would hardly benefit me to poison you when I have plans for the blood inside of you,” the vampire points out. “Also, your diet has been terrible. A good meal of fresh ingredients would do wonders for your taste.”

“Oh, great, the vampire man is critiquing my diet,” Will mutters.

“My name is Hannibal Lecter.”

“Glad to know the name of my murderer, I guess.”

“Eat, Will,” Hannibal says, and somehow he is both threatening and mild at the same time. It’s freaky.

Will eats. The eggs are perfectly salted, creamy and smooth. The coffee is hot and tempered with just the right amount of milk. The sausages, though –

Will bites. Chews. Stops.

Slowly, very slowly, he turns his gaze up to Hannibal. The vampire is sitting perfectly still in a chair next to the bed, not a single movement betraying the fact that he is alive. But his eyes are full of warm satisfaction that only barely, barely misses the mark on unbearable smugness.

Will swallows. His tongue tingles from the spiced meat, but more importantly, from the underlying unique taste that Will knows all too well. “What kind of pork is this?”

“Oh, I think you know,” Hannibal says, still playing at his stone statue self. “Don’t you, little mongoose?”

“How did you – ”

“I tasted your blood.” Hannibal folds his hands in his lap and crosses his legs, like every single shrink Will’s ever been to, trying to look open and inviting. He’s way too smug for it to work though. “So. Will Graham, special agent of the FBI, attached to the Behavioral Analysis Unit. Former cop. Highest closest rate in the force – aside from some cold cases that you haven’t quite managed to close.”

“Congrats, did my blood tell you that too?”

“I ran your license,” Hannibal says shamelessly. “So, you solved the Chesapeake Ripper case but didn’t let anyone know. Shame at taking so long? Disgust at the secret, perhaps?”

“No,” Will says defiantly, because he’ll be damned if he’ll allow anyone to cast aspersions like that on him. “I didn’t solve the Ripper. I became *better* than the Ripper. He wasn’t a cold case; he was a stepping stone. And unlike the Ripper, no one has ever identified my pattern.”

Silence follows his pronouncement. Will wonders, distantly, if he’s just earned himself an even more painful and drawn out death than before.

Then Hannibal *laughs*. “Clever mongoose,” he says, and if Will isn’t mistaken, that’s admiration in his voice. “You figured out that the Ripper was taking organs not as trophies, but as meals.”

“Yeah. Because they were pigs. Lower life forms. Not . . . equals – oh my god, *the Chesapeake Ripper* is your idea of a tasteless American name?”

“It is tasteless,” the goddamned vampire Chesapeake Ripper sitting casually in a catacomb in Florence says. “But one cannot control the media. Eventually when I tired of the game, I simply moved on. I’ll earn a new name, and hopefully it will be better.”

Hannibal stands up. Will leans back, and then he flinches when the movement causes pain to erupt in his neck. When he looks back, Hannibal is once again right in front of him.

“Are you going to kill me now?” Will whispers.

“Hmm,” Hannibal hums, stroking the side of his neck. “I haven’t decided yet. And you do have such a remarkable gift for seeing, little mongoose. What do you see in me now?”

Will takes a deep breath and pushes the terror now. Fear makes the meat bitter, after all. “I – I saw you. The true you. A rare gift, and you gave it unknowingly. And I accepted it, embraced it, and let it fuel my own transformation. My own becoming. A silent birth in the shelter of your shadow, an unspoken sapling planted by the seeds you scattered, a small boat struggling to maintain course in the wake of your ship.”

“Struggling? I don’t see struggle.”

“What happened to my, um, terrible diet?”

“Diets can be fixed. Malnutrition can be handled.” Hannibal smiles. “A very rare gift that so many failed to grasp, and yet you did. Absolutely remarkable.”

“Remarkable enough to go free?”

Hannibal regards him for a long moment. He is still, Will can tell, weighing what to do with him. It’s like he’s flipping a coin and it’s still in the air, and he’s just waiting for it to come down and tell him what to do next.

“Well, you tell me. Would you be happy if I let you go? Or would you be happier if I kept you?”

“I’m not a dog to be kept,” Will snaps.

Hannibal nods, just a gentle dip of his chin, and Will knows he’s made a decision.

He just wishes he knew what the decision was.

And then Hannibal says, “No. You are a flower to be nurtured, a caterpillar to be helped blossom, a mongoose to be taught how to best use its teeth.”

Will stares at him. “Were you this pretentious before you were a vampire?” he demands.

Hannibal ignores him. He rolls to his feet, graceful as a cat, and holds out a hand. “Follow me, Will.”

“Uh. I don’t know if I can walk.”

“Then I will carry – ”

“No, nope, no need for that, I can walk!” Will says hastily.

He, in fact, cannot walk, but at least Hannibal lets Will use him like a crutch and says nothing as Will staggers along. They leave the bedroom, Will’s half eaten breakfast cooling on the nightstand, and go down a hallway covered in expensive tapestries, depicting a jarring mix of bloody battle scenes and joyful sexual scenes. Then they come to a winding staircase, which makes Will dizzy after the second step, and keep walking until they come to a small room that looks more like a dungeon than anything else.

It is furnished, though. A thick carpet covers the floor, a roaring fire in the fireplace warms the air, and a gleaming porcelain sink is set into the wall.

There are also chains. Lots and lots of chains. And –

“Is that a *coffin*?”

“Not in the strictest sense, no. A coffin is used for viewing or keeping a corpse, generally. That is not the purpose of this one,” Hannibal answers.

A whisper of dread gnaws at Will’s spine. Hannibal had asked if he would be preferred to be kept or to be freed, but he’d never said those were the *only* options. And if Mischa spoke the truth and Hannibal really is her brother, then he’s turned people before.

“Hannibal – ”

A brush of air is Will’s only warning before those needle-sharp fangs pierce his neck again. Only this time they don’t just passively stay in place as Hannibal feeds; no, this time they twitch and go deeper and they *burn*, as though Hannibal’s taking out the blood and replacing it with liquid fire that makes Will’s entire body contract with agony.

No part of Will is spared – his heart stutters, his lungs seize, his muscles ache. His very bones scream in agony, from his tiniest toe to his entire ribcage, and almost wishes he would die, just so the pain would end.

Hannibal pulls back, fresh blood dripping from his pearly white fangs. “Don’t worry, little mongoose,” he says, red eyes gleaming. “I’ll be waiting for you after you die.”

Then he strikes again, right over Will’s heart, and the pain crests into a wave too great –

And as the wave drags Will under, Will launches every single filthy, rude, discourteous name he can think of at Hannibal.

Time passes strangely after that. Sometimes Will is aware; sometimes he is not. Sometimes he is in a coffin, beating at it with fist and foot, begging to be let out; sometimes he is chained to a wall, snarling and savage, lunging at anything that so much as twitches.

And sometimes he is just . . . laying there, floating, barely aware of anything beyond a hand in his hair and a trickle at his lips.

One day, the trickle becomes a flood, nourishing and warm and salty, and Will snaps bolt upright to find an arm clenched between his jaws.

Hannibal’s arm, in fact.

“Hello, Will,” Hannibal says casually, not at all seemingly bothered by the right mess Will is making of his fancy and terribly patterned shirt. “You survived.”

Will spits out the arm. It goes against every instinct that he has, but Will’s made his entire life on running towards danger instead of against it, so he manages it. “For a man who puts a lot on value of courtesy, not asking before you turn someone into a creature of the night is pretty rude,” he tells Hannibal.

Hannibal tilts his head. “I offered you freedom or sanctuary, and you did not choose freedom. You merely asked for sanctuary as an equal. This is the only way I could extend that to you.”

“ . . . Okay, yeah, that was my bad, I should have been more specific,” Will admits. “I wanted sanctuary as a *human*.”

“I cannot turn you back,” Hannibal says smugly.

“That would be more convincing if you weren’t smug as hell right now.” Something twigs in Will’s mouth, and he scratches at his teeth only to pull out a scrap of cloth, soaked with blood and saliva.

A scrap of plaid cloth.

“Really? You couldn’t even bother to not feed me bits of your shirt?”

“You’re a young vampire,” Hannibal says. “The scent of blood still sends you into a frenzy, and will for some time. It’s not safe to feed you the normal way. But I am your sire – your creator. Even in the depths of your worst frenzy, you would never hurt me.”

Will narrows his eyes. “You could still have been my creator without sucking all my blood out.”

“Not necessarily. Did you know you had encephalitis?” Hannibal asks, changing tracks so abruptly that Will’s a little thrown.

“Uh? No?”

“You’re not aware of what encephalitis is, are you?”

“If you tell me it has anything to do with elephants, I’m out.”

Hannibal lets out an aggrieved sigh. “Encephalitis is an inflammation of brain. No doubt you were suffering from the side effects: terrible headaches, sleepwalking, hallucinations. Left untreated, you would soon have slipped into a coma, and then into death.”

“ . . . And you tasted that on me?”

“Smelled, actually. I always had an acute sense of smell, even before I was turned.”

“And so your solution,” Will says slowly, “was to knock me out, feed me, and then turn me into a vampire?”

“The venom has healing properties. It took of the encephalitis, for sure. And it healed that very poorly stitched bullet wound in your shoulder.”

“Stripping people naked and looking at their scars while they are unconscious is rude,” Will notes.

Hannibal’s fangs flash as he smiles “Who said you were unconscious?”

Which is when Will realizes abruptly that he is naked as the day he is born. He’s also remarkably clean, like someone’s given him a bath, aside from the small drops from where he apparently seized Hannibal’s arm like a starving dog and sank his teeth.

“Okay, very funny. Can you give me some clothes now?”

“Little mongoose,” Hannibal says tenderly, “I am going to give you the *world*.”

FINIS

End Notes

A/N: Hannibal has a lot of fun introducing Will to the world of being a vampire, mostly because his philosophy is like "We're both immortal and basically indestructible, so we can do whatever we want!" Will is still irritated that Hannibal turned him without asking, but he does enjoy being allowed to unleash his darker side and having someone who can actually keep up with his mental leaps. Plus it makes Hannibal twitch when Will makes a bloody mess all over the clothes Hannibal bought for him.

Huge thanks to the Hannigram Tropefest mod for putting this together! You can find more works in the AO3 collection.

If you enjoyed this fic, you can find me @ Telegram/Discord as TheSilverQueen : Tumblr as thesilverqueenlady : Twitter as silverqueenlady

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